Delights of University Life.

Following is an abstract of the opening address delivered by Chancellor Andrews of Nebraska State University before the students at Memorial hall, Saturday morning, September 21:

Colleagues and Pupils: We are permitted today to begin the work of another academic year. Back again from the lake-shore and mountain-side, from home and home friends, refreshed, invigorated, ardent, all of us are in condition, I trust, to take up with avidity and success the labors which await us here.

It is no small part of the art of living to know how to discharge one's duties with cheerfulness. What kills is irksome work. If we can learn to be joyful in all we do we shall flourish upon toil the most assiduous and exacting.

It is possible for a right-minded man to view with complacency his lot in life whatever it may be, easier or harder, noble or common. If the business is honest and he can do it—do it apparently better than anything else and more conveniently than his neighbors can—then he may say, "This is my due contribution to the general weal. What my hands can find to do, how onerous soever, I will do with my might." That not only can be, it ought to be, one's sentiment, even if one's place in the world's workshop is in itself unpleasant.

But there are paths where obligation and delight walk hand in hand; tasks intrinsically charming; callings in which, if they are rightly apprehended, interest prompts to best exertion at the same time with duty. The pursuit of education at universities seems to me to be one of these.

A chief reason why it is so is the fascination of that mental mastery which it is our duty and privilege here to achieve. Metaphysicians say that the most fundamental attribute of ultimate being is activity. The latest thought fully justifies the old theologians who called God "actus purus." And man is god-like in this; he joys to be active; that is his property. We err in conceiving of rest as in the strict sense of desirable goal. "In life," says Pascal, "we always think that we are seeking repose, while in reality what we incessantly seek is agitation." Our meaning when we sigh for quiescence is frictionless and calm action such as Aristotle denominates the highest good, "a perfect activity in a perfect life."

But no kind of bodily exertion is worthy to be compared for the delight it yields with mental exertion and achievement. To think, to learn, to perceive new relations among things, to widen the spirit's horizon—this, to all persons capable of enjoying it, is a fortune indeed. Every one of us, I believe, shares the mind of Lessing, who said: "Did the Almighty, holding in his right hand truth and in his left search after truth, deign to tender me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation. I should request search after truth."

Well, search after truth is in this place our express vocation.

Learning "for its own sake," in the strict sense of this phrase, meaning that we learn without any reference whatever to any good either to ourselves or to others to be had thereby, is a contradiction. If such a course were conceivable or possible it would still be irrational. But let us be convinced that we are vital members of society; that our mental cultivation will count in furtherance of human progress, that our fellow-men are to be made happier and better through the training which we are giving and receiving; we then see it to be reasonable and good to exert ourselves to the utmost. Only under the stimulus of such a view, I believe, can thoughtful persons permanently do their best.

While it cannot be said that the school of learning is the sole nursery of the sublime temper necessary to splendor of civilization, it is certainly a most important, even an indispensable nursery.

Very much of this higher life of the spirit connects itself with literature and religion, and every observer of men or reader of history knows that both there are closely dependent on schools. Very few literary celebrities are there who are not children of the schools, and these not children are, at least, grandchildren. Religion has an affinity with organized learning not a whit less close.

No tongue can tell the debt which the practical, every-day science on which the world now lives, owes to the great masters and law givers of science in the departments of mathematics and physics, and every one of them was the offspring of some institution for high learning. Nearest to an exception is Des Cartes, whose pupilage ended early and who is distinguished among thinkers for having wrought out, in a soldier's hut and by a soldier's campfire, some of the most recondite truths known to man.

Learning enriches the higher life of humanity not out of its intellectual funds alone. Ethical principle and practice are stiffened by influences from the same source. Instance the love of right for right's sake, the idea of simple truth irrespective of consequences, which has come into being almost solely from the inculcation of exact science. This is a result for which those who love righteousness should be grateful to the positive philosophy. In this respect the positivists have, without thinking of it, become powerful ethical teachers. They have insisted, as had never been done before, upon the importance of laying aside prejudice and interest, and getting at simple, unalloyed fact. There has thus been called into existence a new, distinct and most beautiful form of the love for truth. This noble phase of virtue is emphasized and nourished today in every scientific laboratory and class room throughout the world. It has come to possess even theology, and will yet revolutionize that science. It has gone over into the study of the past, and founded the science of historical investigation. Many false, but time-honored judgments touching the men and things of former times are changing in consequence of the truer historical apprehension engendered from this cause. It results that national and ecclesiastical animosities are becoming less intense, opening the way for larger peace and good will among men.

There is an idea as prevalent as it is baseless and mischievous, that the doctrine of evolution, in particular, so far as it is accepted, renders all theistic or properly religious belief unnecessary and stupid. The logical necessity of theistic belief Darwinism does not so much as touch. One may admit all that Darwin himself ever asserted and yet remain as orthodox as Athanasius.

Radical skepticism, which was the bane of Greek philosophy, can never come back.

The skeptic's mind, like a weak stomach, could keep nothing down. Pyrrho would not admit that anything is true or certain. "Say not," he bade, "this is so," but only "this seems to me to be so," "It is possible," "It may be," and the like. The new academy keener sighted than Pyrrho, seeing that this very suspension of judgment was a sort of affirmation, laid it down that a man can know nothing save that he knows nothing, and that this is not proper knowledge but feeling. The utter impossibility of knowledge and the fatuity of all pretense thereto—these were the invariable tenets of skepticism as it flourished of old.

Well, science has made these tenets impossible now. Thinkers of all stripes read of them today with a smile.

If asked why I love academic life and work, I reply: Because, in it, we have the privilege of delightfully exercising our minds in the pursuit of truth, a joy doubly rich in that the work can be carried on by many of us in common; that our activity is useful as well as agreeable, not only aiding the race to live, but refining civilization, widening the skirts of light and forwarding all the high interests of humankind, being vital to the advance of the material and of the social sciences alike; and, lastly, that it is a pronounced and positive force in a strictly moral and religious way, establishing, not weakening, rectitude in conduct, promoting and not withstanding faith in a spiritual world and in the ultimacy of mind.

Students, one and all, resolve, I bespeech you, to do your best this year. Most of you, I am glad to bear witness, are duly diligent already, but not quite all. Many are industrious, but order their efforts less wisely than were to be wished. A few, alas, have wasted rich opportunities, nay, have even set up in their characters a positive disinclination, rapidly turning into inability, to do well. To such it must be a bitter thought that departed days cannot be called back and put to better use. Oh, be stirred by the reflection that the future is yours, to be employed profitably if you will!

Colleagues, let us, as teachers, challenge one another this day to renewed devotion and to more triumphant efficiency. It is a rare boon to have ever to do with intellectual things; and it is a colossal responsibility to be charged with the mental and moral making of new generations. It is, in literal fact, ours to fix in part the destiny of the race. Could we but feel the dignity of such a mission we should never lack incentives to best service. Years would not quench our zeal and death would find us at our posts.

May there descend upon us as a blessed spell the good spirit of those revered teachers now gone from us, whose sometime presence here still sanctifies this place.

Small Bits of Humor.

Chicago Times-Herald: "What's all this trash?" demanded the old man, as he stumbled over a pile of stuff in the hall. "Great heavens! It seems that we've got two or three sets of harness and enough other stuff here to go into the ship chandlering business."

"There, pa," his wife replied, "don't be disagreeable. You were a boy once yourself, you know. That's Will's football uniform."

Chicago Tribune: Examining Physician (to applicant for insurance)—"H'm! Young man, there is something the matter with your heart."

Applicant—"Your daughter found that out a long time ago, doctor."

Newark Advertiser: Floor Walker—"Do you wish to look at some suitings and trouserings?"

De Jones—"No; I want to see some collarings and cuffings."